

Driftless Area Master Planning: Casting Into the Future

Fall 2012



The Department of Natural Resources is in the process of updating its master plan for all the properties it owns along fishing corridors in the Driftless Area. The properties are spread over 23 counties and most are in narrow strips along hundreds of streams. The thousands of acres of DNR land provide access to anglers fishing for brook trout, brown trout and smallmouth bass.

The agency is hoping that property owners, anglers, and leaders of conservation-minded clubs will provide input on public access

needs, habitat management and restoration opportunities and potential future land acquisition priorities. Local residents and frequent visitors to the area bring unique viewpoints to the table that the DNR can incorporate into its master plan.

Join us by contacting your local fisheries biologist or our outreach specialist to help plan for the future of one of Wisconsin's greatest and most beautiful assets — the Driftless Area.

What's Involved in Master Planning?

First, DNR will draft a *Regional and Property Analysis (RPA)*, a document rich with maps that will describe the eight major river basins in the Driftless Area (see map on reverse page), including an overview of their land and water resources, notable rare or endangered species, invasive species, and cultural and recreational resources. The RPA will also describe lands owned by the DNR and public and private conservation groups.

The RPA will also present a "scorecard" to assess stream health and habitat quality for brook trout, brown trout and smallmouth bass for each of the multiple watersheds within each region.

This document will provide the foundation for a series of public meetings to be held in Spring 2013.

The second phase of the planning process will begin after the public has had a chance to comment on the RPA. With numerous local partners



such as Trout Unlimited, the DNR will develop a draft Master Plan that will present alternatives for managing habitat and acquiring additional public access to the streams. The Master Plan will serve as a guide for habitat management and land acquisition for a 15-year period.

A second set of public meetings will be held to get feedback on the plan and to select the preferred management and public access alternative. Once the plan is finalized, it will be presented to the Natural Resources Board for their consideration and potential approval.

Join Us

The DNR is looking for local people to help with the planning effort. Local leaders will get together occasionally for a few hours per meeting to discuss public access and habitat restoration opportunities and needs. Locals can help by encouraging their friends and colleagues to attend public meetings to review and comment on DNR's draft products. Together we can better manage existing resources and plan for the future.

Our website, <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/masterplanning/DriftlessStreams/> is a place to find draft plans, meeting announcements and to sign up for our electronic newsletter. For more information, please contact: DNRDriftlessStreams@wisconsin.gov or call (608) 266-2698.



Long-term Challenges



Long-term planning for fish management is challenging because the environment is constantly changing, due to a variety of factors including how land is used and long-term changes in the climate.

Urbanization may decrease the quality of the fisheries when water runs off parking lots, driveways and rooftops instead of sinking into the ground and replenishing the groundwater supply. Runoff water from impervious surfaces may be warmer than what cold-water fish can tolerate. Soil erosion can deposit sediment on the streambed and degrade habitat.

Wisconsin's changing climate will also be taken into consideration when developing the fisheries-focused plan. Warmer air temperatures will increase water temperatures and long-term drought may reduce cool, groundwater flow into coldwater streams.

Brook trout will be the most vulnerable to these changes because they can endure only a narrow temperature range to thrive and reproduce. In some cases, streams dominated by brook trout may shift to become brown trout streams or even small mouth bass waters by the mid-21st century. Different fish species require different management practices.

Driftless Area Watersheds and Planning Regions

with DNR Fisheries Biologists and Program Leaders

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